

**Annapolis Recreation and Parks Department
Recreation and Open Space Master Plan Public Meeting
Eastport Fire Station, 914 Bay Ridge Avenue
Wednesday, October 8, 2003, 7:00pm**

Meeting Summary

Welcome

LeeAnn Plumer, Director, City of Annapolis Recreation and Parks Department explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss recreation and open space issues in the City as input to a new recreation and open space master plan; a long-range planning document to address the City's recreational and open space needs for the next 10 to 15 years. The City had contracted with the firm of Environmental Resources Management (ERM) to assist in preparing the Plan. Staff from ERM were present to assist in facilitating the discussion.

Mayor Ellen Moyer gave a brief history of recreation planning in the City since the 1980s. She explained that the first open space plan for the City had been the 1987 "Parks and Paths for People" plan. This plan won a national award and continues to guide planning to this day. She added that many of the plan's recommendations had been completed. The Mayor pointed out that recreation and open space play a vital role in the City contributing to the way the City looks and feels, and is an important factor in the City's international reputation as one of the top 20 places to live. She noted several projects in current planning or development, such as:

- The completion of the City's trail system.
- A new recreation center to be located in Truxtun Park (in the City's budget for FY05 and FY06).
- Naval Academy stadium: walking trail around the perimeter, and soccer fields on the south side.

Mayor Moyer encouraged citizen input into the new plan.

Presentation

Clive Graham, ERM project manager, gave a brief description of the master plan and of ERM's role in the master plan process. He said that ERM and the City were looking forward to hearing from the public regarding what they thought were the needs, demands, and opportunities for recreation in the City. He suggested that the attendees stay together as one group (rather than split into separate groups) so that everyone would have an opportunity to hear what everyone else had to say. He then asked people to form a circle and opened the meeting to public comment.

Public Input

Golf. Herman Ellinghausen noted that there was a great need for golf practice facilities in Annapolis. He suggested that the Old Bates High School fields would be an ideal location for such an activity, adding that it would bring broad benefits to the City including increased people-presence, growth in programs for youth and adults, and consequential reduction in crime and drug activity. He added that that small groups of people do practice golf at the Old Bates fields, but the activity needs to be formalized, which could be achieved at little cost and with the assistance of groups and organizations such as Bruce Crampton's Sports Performance Center, Anne Arundel County, Modells sports store, orthopedic and sports medicine interests, high school coaches, the Capital newspaper.

Facility Improvements. Kathy Samaras, representing the Annapolis Area Recreation Council presented a list of recommended facility improvements that had originally been identified in 1995. She said she would forward the list to LeeAnn Plumer.

Waterworks Park/Fishing. Bruce Morse suggested the following:

- The City should consider allowing wading for fly fishing.
- The City should consider allowing kayaks and flow tubes in the park, just as the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission does at its reservoirs.
- The City should review its permitting and fee system with a goal of making it more user-friendly (for example, to replace a lost pass).
- The City should do whatever it could to improve fishing in City parks and creeks.

Water Park. Jerrie Louck said that the City should consider developing a water park, similar to the park at Chesapeake Beach. As she envisioned it, the park would be family-friendly, would attract people from all income brackets, and bring multiple benefits to the

City. It could be built in conjunction with a community center, as was done in Chesapeake Beach. It would generate revenues for the City (she said that in Chesapeake Beach the town was using revenues to pay for infrastructure projects including roads). Entry fees could be structured such that City residents would pay very little. It would provide jobs for City residents, especially young people.

Hispanic Community's Needs. Maria Sasso, Executive Director of ALMAA, Inc. said that the Hispanic community's needs were not being met. She estimated there were between 4,500 and 7,500 Hispanics in the City, many of them single men from Mexico and El Salvador, and many illegal residents. Concentrations were in the Forest Drive corridor, Eastport, and in the Admiral Farragut Apartments. She said she would like to see the following and offered ALMAA'S assistance:

- Stronger outreach efforts. She said that for many, their illegal status made it difficult for them to participate in organized recreation through regular means. She estimated that 80 percent of the Hispanics were illiterate and needed assistance in obtaining permits, for example.
- Creation of sports leagues just for Hispanics, with a focus on Truxtun Park. Sports of particular interest were soccer, basketball, and baseball.
- Teen clubs, dances where teenagers could mix with others in the community.
- A Hispanic festival.
- Adding a Hispanic member to the Parks and Recreation Board.

Several speakers responded to Ms Sasso. One pointed out that some outreach efforts had occurred. Another felt that the City should encourage inclusion of Hispanics into existing leagues rather than creation of Hispanic-only leagues.

Sports Fields. Several speakers talked at different times during the meeting about "linear" sports fields (soccer, hockey, lacrosse, etc.). Jesse Simmerman, Annapolis Soccer Club, said that more fields were needed. He said that his club had 1,200 children enrolled. He added that the lower fields at Bates were not used but could be. Another speaker countered that this area was flood prone.

Mr. Simmerman added that more lighted fields were needed. The only lighted field was a practice field and not useable for matches. LeeAnn Plumer explained that neighborhood opposition to lighted fields was a problem. Mr. Simmerman added that indoor soccer was also popular; he said that his club uses the Salvation Army Building on Hilltop Lane.

Kathy Samaras said she did not think more fields were needed. Instead, the City should take better care of the fields it had (drainage, fertilizing, irrigation, rotation).

African American Community. Kirby McKinney, Director of the Stanton Center, emphasized the important role of recreation in reducing crime. He was disappointed that the African American Community was not better represented at the meeting. He said that meetings should be held at the Stanton Center, to get more participation. Taney Hamill, Chair of the City's Recreation Advisory Board agreed.

Recreation Center. Several speakers addressed the need for a new recreation center. This had been talked about for many years. LeeAnn Plumer said that the preliminary architectural concept was very exciting, and that the center was in the City's budget, scheduled for construction beginning in 2005. One speaker added that while there needs to be a push for a new recreation center, the downtown center should remain open for the downtown community.

Volleyball. Ed Wilson, President of the Annapolis Volleyball Athletic Association, said that his club had 300 members. He said that they play at the Griscom Building, but that conditions were not very good, which was why a new recreation center was so important to him. He praised Sherry Whiteford, the City's Athletics Supervisor, for her excellent work in scheduling sports leagues.

Trails. Several speakers said that the City's trail system needed to be completed. Some sections ended at streets that lacked sidewalks or shoulders.

Children. One speaker said that the City had sufficient activities for young children but not for the teen population. This speaker said that more activities were needed for 14 to 18 year olds, which was a critical age in terms of juvenile crime.

Tennis. Chris Kamenoff, Anne Arundel County Tennis Association (AACTA), said the courts at Truxtun Park were the best in the area and were heavily used. She said that tennis was a low cost sport that provided recreation opportunities for many people while not taking a lot of area. She added that she used donated racquets in her training activities with low-income persons. She said that of the 12 courts at Truxtun Park, two did not meet regulation net height due to heaved net posts, that current lighting needed repair and that more courts could be lighted. She added that restrooms were needed. She said that there were partnership opportunities with the Naval Academy. She said that the Academy was very interested in having a tennis bubble in the City. She felt that with a little investment the City could host tennis tournaments, which are a great revenue generator. She added that more tennis instruction needed to be provided for children.

Parole. Bill Wilson said that more open space was needed in the Parole community. He said he served on an Outer West Street planning advisory committee that recommended conversion of the Annapolis Produce lot on Lee Street from industrial to open space/recreational use. He said that this land should be acquired now, while the opportunity existed.

Access to the water. Taney Hamill said that there was very little public access to the water in Annapolis, particularly for activities such as kayaking, canoeing, and sailing, etc. Deborah Wood, Executive Director of the Chesapeake Children's Museum on Silopanna Road, said that the City should pursue the possibility of a floating dock at Truxtun Park. She said that through the children's museum she received grants and had been able to give some children the opportunity to learn how to build a kayak. She had a vision in which more could be done along these lines working with children in public housing. One participant said that his child had participated in sailing lessons offered by the City and that it had been a very positive experience.

Developmentally disabled. One speaker said that the City should provide activities for developmentally disabled residents.

Street-End Parks. One speaker, representing Capuco Consulting, said that the City's street-end parks offered opportunities to help educate residents on environmental protection and appreciation, through means such as interpretive signage. Jim Victor, an Annapolis resident who lives next to a street-end park, praised the City, Art Thomas, Parks Administrator, and his crew for its clean up efforts after Hurricane Isabel. He singled out their efforts at Horn Point street-end park. Pug Victor, Jim Victor's wife said how much she valued views from that park at the different seasons.

Participation. One speaker spoke highly of the parks and open space in her native Wales which were more open and part of the fabric of everyday life, not fenced in as parks tended to be in the U.S. She encouraged the City to incorporate whimsical things in parks and open spaces to encourage participation.

Truxtun Park. Jerri Louck said that Truxtun Park was underutilized. She said it was approximately 85 acres, which in her estimation was "huge", and able to accommodate a great variety of different recreational uses. Another speaker pointed out that there were environmental constraints at Truxtun.

Skateboarding. Chris Opilla said that for young people the future was moving toward skateboarding, and other extreme sports and activities. He said that the skate park in

Truxtun Park was less than a year old but would not be adequate for future growth. A bigger skate park facility was needed. He felt that with the right facilities the City could attract regional tournaments along the lines of the Gravity Games and the X Games, which were strong revenue generators.

Meeting Conclusion

Mr. Graham thanked everyone for coming and for giving their ideas and suggestions. He asked that any additional comments be written and submitted to Ms. Plumer for consideration. Mr. Graham noted that if participants wanted to follow the planning process, one way was to sign up to receive e-mail notices of meetings and the plan's status, via the City's website at .

The meeting concluded at 9:10 p.m.

Attendance List

Chris Aist

Roger H. Kizer Ball

Mahmoud Baptiste

Gavin Buckley

Rob Bussink

Carrie Capuco

Beth Devlin

Herman Ellinghouse

Clive Graham

CT Hamill

Daria Hardin

Chuck Hecker

Joyce Hoffer

Meg Jones

Chris Kamenoff

Kierre McCune

Kathy McKaig-Rak

Kirby McKinney

Bruce Morje

Dick Morin

Dawn Moyer

George P

Jan Pitcairn

Lisa Pline

LeeAnn Plumer

Cathy Samaras

Maria Sasso

Jesse Simmerman

Debby Smith

Brian Talarczyk

Art Thomas

Tim Tower

Pug and Jim Victor

Sherry Whiteford

Ed Wilson

Bill Wilson

Additional Public Comments Received After the Public Meeting

Bicycle Lanes. Debby Smith wrote that bicycle lanes would help give young people and adults access to recreational areas. Examples of roads where lanes would help are West Street, Forest Drive, and Bay Ridge Avenue.

Future Parks. Debby Smith wrote that the proposed Actons Landing development will incorporate at the intersection of Shaw and Charles Streets a passive park, a boardwalk, floating dock, and water-taxi stop. Estimated completion date is 2005.

Sports Fields. Dave Lanham, Athletic Director of St. Mary's High School thanked the City for its use of City athletic facilities. He felt that irrigating the fields at Annapolis Sports Complex, Weems/Whalen and Old Bates Middle School would make them top notch facilities suitable for youth and high school sports. He also recommended restrooms with washing facilities in lieu of portajohns, and storage facilities for organizations that use the fields. Mr. Lanham's letter included a petition signed by 53 people in favor of i) a new recreation center and, ii) improvements to fields.

Recreation Center and Sports Fields. The Annapolis Volleyball Athletic Association and Annapolis softball teams submitted a petition signed by 62 people in favor of i) a new recreation center and, ii) improvements to fields.

Dog Park. Kelly McConnell recommended a dog park at Annapolis Sports Complex (Germantown Fields). She noted that she has been nipped by unleashed dogs in the park area.